

NCA
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DAVID LENT/JOHANNESBURG

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RHODESIA VOTER TRENDS?

ANNCR:

WITH THE SIGNING OF AN INTERNAL BLACK MAJORITY RULE AGREEMENT IN RHODESIA, PUBLIC OPINION AND POPULAR SUPPORT HAVE FOR THE FIRST TIME BECOME CRUCIAL FACTORS AMONG THAT COUNTRY'S SIX-POINT-EIGHT MILLION BLACKS. VOA'S DAVID LENT EXAMINES SOME POTENTIAL TRENDS IN RHODESIAN PUBLIC OPINION IN THIS BACKGROUND REPORT.

VOICE:

IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN STANDARD PRACTICE AMONG RIVAL BLACK NATIONALIST FACTIONS IN RHODESIA TO CLAIM BROAD SUPPORT. BUT THERE HAS NEVER BEEN ANY RELIABLE WAY TO CHECK SUCH CLAIMS. WITH ONE-MAN, ONE-VOTE ELECTIONS EXPECTED LATER THIS YEAR UNDER THE TERMS OF THE INTERNAL SETTLEMENT THIS IS CHANGING, AND RIVAL FACTION LEADERS ARE OUT SEEKING VOTER SUPPORT IN THE CLASSICAL FASHION OF ELECTORAL CAMPAIGNS.

THE REVEREND NDABANINGI SITHOLE, WHO HEADS HIS OWN FACTION OF THE AFRICAN NATIONAL COUNCIL, IS PLANNING A SERIES OF RALLIES TO ASSESS SUPPORT OF PEOPLE FROM OUTLYING DISTRICTS. AND SUPPORTERS OF BISHOP ABEL MUZOREWA ARE ORGANIZING WHAT THEY HOPE WILL BE A MASS RALLY INVOLVING AS MANY AS ONE MILLION PERSONS FOR HIS RETURN TO SALISBURY ON SUNDAY. THE BISHOP HAS BEEN AT THE UNITED NATIONS AND IN WASHINGTON AND LONDON SEEKING FOREIGN SUPPORT OF THE INTERNAL SETTLEMENT.

AS TO DOMESTIC SUPPORT, A RECENT SURVEY SUGGESTS THAT THE BISHOP HAS NO CAUSE FOR CONCERN. THE JOHANNESBURG NEWSPAPER, THE STAR, POLLED ONE HUNDRED TWENTY BLACKS IN RHODESIA'S MIDLANDS AND FOUND THAT FIFTY SIX PERCENT SAID THEY WOULD VOTE

FOR BISHOP MUZOREWA. NINETEEN PERCENT SAID THEY WOULD SUPPORT JOSHUA NKOMO, ONE OF THE LEADERS OF THE PATRIOTIC FRONT. SIXTEEN PERCENT SAID THEY WOULD SUPPORT THE REVEREND SITHOLE. AT THE BOTTOM OF THE POPULARITY SCALE WERE ROBERT MUGABE, THE OTHER LEADER OF THE POPULAR FRONT, WITH FIVE PERCENT SUPPORT, AND CHIEF JEREMIAH CHIRAU, LEADER OF THE CONSERVATIVE ZIMBABWE UNITED PEOPLES ORGANIZATION, WHO HAD THREE-POINT-THREE PERCENT.

THE RHODESIA MIDLANDS AREA WAS CHOSEN FOR THE SURVEY BECAUSE ONLY IN THAT PROVINCE IS THERE A MIXTURE OF SHONA AND NDEBELE TRIBAL PEOPLE. THE PROVINCE IS ALSO ONE OF THE LEAST AFFECTED BY THE WAR. VOTING PREFERENCES MIGHT WELL BE DIFFERENT IN OTHER AREAS WHERE THE WAR HAS HAD A STRONG IMPACT, OR WHERE ONE TRIBE OR THE OTHER PREVAILS. SO THE MIDLANDS WAS TAKEN AS A NATIONAL AVERAGE.

THE APPEAL OF BISHOP MUZOREWA APPEARS TO BE BASED ON PRECISELY THOSE QUALITIES WHICH HAVE ALSO CAUSED CRITICISM OF HIM AS A LEADER. CHARGED WITH LACKING POLITICAL PERSONALITY, THE BISHOP ATTRACTS HIS SUPPORTERS BECAUSE HE IS NOT SEEN AS A POLITICIAN. THE MAJORITY OF BLACKS SEEM DRAWN TO HIM, THE SURVEY SHOWS, BECAUSE HE HAS A REPUTATION FOR GENTILITY AND PERSONAL KINDNESS. THE SURVEY ALSO SHOWS THAT THE BISHOP HAS APPEAL AMONG YOUNG BLACKS. OF THE SIXTY-SEVEN PERSONS WHO SUPPORTED HIM IN THE SURVEY, SEVENTEEN WERE YOUTHS SOME BARELY OVER THE MINIMUM VOTING AGE OF EIGHTEEN.

SUPPORT FOR THE REVEREND SITHOLE, ON THE OTHER HAND, COMES MAINLY FROM OLDER PEOPLE WHO APPRECIATE HIS INTELLECTUAL CAPACITY AND WHO REMEMBER HIM AS ONE OF THE FATHERS OF THE BLACK NATIONALIST MOVEMENT IN THE 1960S.

THE SURVEY ALSO SEEMS TO CONFIRM THE BELIEF THAT ALMOST ALL MEMBERS OF THE NDEBELE TRIBE WOULD VOTE FOR JOSHUA NKOMO. THE NDEBELES PEOPLE CONSTITUTE ABOUT FOURTEEN PERCENT OF RHODESIA'S BLACKS. ALL OF ROBER MUGABE'S SUPPORTERS IN THE SURVEY WERE SHONAS. THEY WERE THE MOST RADICAL PEOPLE INTERVIEWED, AND WERE UNITED IN THEIR REJECTION OF THE INTERNAL AGREEMENT.

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